

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease

What is pelvic inflammatory disease?

Pelvic inflammatory disease, or PID, is a common infection that women get in their pelvic organs. It usually starts in the vagina and cervix, and spreads into the uterus (womb), fallopian tubes, or ovaries. Most women with PID are 15 to 29 years of age.

How do you get it?

PID usually is caused by bacteria such as chlamydia and gonorrhea. Most women get PID by having sex with a man who is infected, although he may not know he is infected. Having multiple sex partners can increase your risk of getting PID. Sometimes PID is caused by complications from pelvic surgery.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can range from mild to severe. They may include lower abdominal or pelvic pain, pain during sex, abnormal bleeding or spotting, abnormal vaginal discharge, fever, frequent urination, low back pain, and nausea or vomiting. You should see your doctor if you have any of these symptoms. Sometimes the symptoms of PID are similar to those of appendicitis, ovarian cyst, urinary tract infections, or endometriosis. Some women have no symptoms.

How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will do a pelvic exam and test you for the sexually transmitted infections gonorrhea and chlamydia. This may include

testing your urine or blood. You usually do not need other tests.

How is it treated?

Your doctor will prescribe antibiotics. Most patients do not need to be in the hospital unless they are pregnant or very sick. Sometimes women need surgery because of complications of PID, but this is rare.

You should rest, drink plenty of fluids, and avoid sex and douching until you have finished your medicines and your symptoms are gone. It is important to take all the medicine as prescribed and follow up with your doctor.

What happens if it is not treated?

If you don't get treated, you could have chronic pain in your pelvis. You could also have scarring in your fallopian tubes, which may lead to infertility or an ectopic (tubal) pregnancy. Rarely, PID causes a serious infection in your ovary called a tubo-ovarian abscess. This can be life-threatening.

How do you prevent PID?

Regular screening for sexually transmitted infections can help prevent PID. Not having sex, or making sure that you and your partner only have sex with each other, also can help prevent PID. Use condoms every time you have sex. If you or your partner has chlamydia or gonorrhea, it is important that you both get treated. Do not have sex until you have both taken all of



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your medicine. Do not douche, because it may increase your chances of getting PID.

Where can I get more information?

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

Web site: <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/pelvic-inflammatory-disease.html>

American Social Health Association

Web site: <http://www.ashastd.org/std-sti-works/pid.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/PID/STDFact-PID.htm>

Planned Parenthood

Web site: <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/stds-hiv-safer-sex/pelvic-inflammatory-disease-pid-4278.htm>

PubMed Health

Web site: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001890/>

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Notes:

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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